

SENATOR ANNE BEEBE-CENTER

THE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

LD 178: An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community

IN SUPPORT

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Madison Burke, a lifelong resident of Lovell, Maine, here today to testify in favor of LD 178: An Act to Support Reentry and Reintegration into the Community.

When I was seven years old, I was pulled out of my second-grade classroom and escorted down to the school office, where my life would change forever. I was quickly shuffled home with hushed voices and no explanation, greeted by two police officers. They sat me down in our living room, laughing as they asked me if my father had ever hurt me. My dad was my best friend, and I couldn't understand what was happening. I choked out my answers to their questions in tears and, without so much as a chance to say goodbye, my father was taken away. I couldn't even see him leave. For more than six months, I wasn't allowed to speak with him. I watched as Father's Day came and went, and all my peers talked about the fun outings they went on with their dads.

All I could think about was that I had no idea when or if I would ever see my father again.

I wrote to him every day in a small notebook that I carried with me. He couldn't read what I wrote, so I would sometimes write back to myself as him, wanting nothing more than to hear his voice. My father being ripped out of my family was one of the worst things to ever happen to me, and I still feel the pain of it today. Although my father only spent a year away from home, that single year felt endless, and it tore my family apart. My story is not unique, however.

According to data from the Maine Children's Alliance collected from 2011 to 2012, 8% of

Maine children reported at least one parent's incarceration during their childhood. This equates to approximately 20,000 Maine children who have experienced parental incarceration. Many of these children experience much longer periods of time without their parent than I did, which only serves to increase the negative effects they face. My support of this bill is not simply about how parole could have brought my family together sooner, but about how this bill could reunite countless Maine families. Extensive research tells us that children who face parental incarceration have worse outcomes than those who do not and are also more likely to be incarcerated themselves in the future. Therefore, not only would the reestablishment of parole save money on individuals who have already been sentenced but has the potential to provide further savings by preventing future incarcerations. Parole is estimated to save \$76,000 per incarcerated individual, per year. If a person has proven themselves to be rehabilitated, it wastes money to continue to hold them in custody. Parole is not only an ethical win for the state of Maine, but a financial one. Therefore, I implore you to vote in support of LD 178. Thank you.

Madison Burke